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## 2024 WSDA Legislative Priorities

### Promote Quality Dental Care & Optimal Oral Health for All Washingtonians

#### **SUPPORT HB 1655 | Concerning Provider Contract Compensation**

*This bill would:*

- Require provider compensation increases commensurate with consumer price index increases for contracts between a health carrier and a health care provider who is not employed or affiliated with a hospital or large hospital system.

#### **SUPPORT SB 6307 | Stop Big Insurance Companies from Reducing Access to Dental Care and Increasing Patient Costs**

*This bill would:*

- Require parity in dental insurance company reimbursements whether procedures are performed by in-network or out-of-network dentists.

#### **SUPPORT SB 6218 | Enhance Fairness in Big Insurance Practices to Ensure Full Patient Benefits**

*This bill would:*

- Require that any company offering dental insurance benefit plans in Washington pay out a minimum of 83% of the premiums they collect in the form of patient benefits.
- Require that any company offering dental insurance benefit plans in Washington report what percentage of the premiums they collect in this state are paid out in the form of patient benefits in the state.

#### **SUPPORT SB 6097 | Protect Patient Benefits by Requiring Transparency in Network Leasing**

*This bill would:*

- Reduce unexpected bills and expenses for patients.
- Allow dentists to review insurance contracts and determine which are best for patients.
- Bring Washington state into alignment with 28 other states that regulate network leasing, including Oregon, which passed similar legislation in 2023.

#### **SUPPORT HB 2176 | Expand Access to Affordable, Quality Preventive Dental Care**

*This bill would:*

- Create a "Preventive Dental Assistant" license that would permit licensees to provide basic preventive care under supervision of a dentist.
- Require applicants to complete additional education and demonstrate competency as determined by the Dental Quality Assurance Commission (Commission) in order to become licensed.
- Allow the Commission to undergo rulemaking to determine what duties a dentist may delegate to a dental assistant under general supervision.
- Enable the Commission to require continuing education for expanded function dental auxiliaries — a longstanding request of the Commission.

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## Additional Legislative Priorities

### Fully Fund the Expansion of the RIDE Program

- The Regional Initiatives in Dental Education (RIDE) program trains providers to meet the needs of rural and underserved populations in the state and region. To date, 80% of program graduates practice in rural or underserved areas with 48% of RIDE alumni currently practicing in Eastern or Central Washington. This is notable given the national rate of DDS graduates practicing in these communities hovers below 10%.
- WSDA supports the University of Washington School of Dentistry and Eastern Washington University's (EWU) request for additional funding for infrastructure and personnel to expand the capacity and footprint of the RIDE program. This funding would double the number of students the program is able to accommodate and add a second year of dental curriculum to the program at EWU in Spokane.

### Fully Fund the Establishment of the PNWU and YNHS Dental Facility

- Yakima Neighborhood Health Services (YNHS) is collaborating with the Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences (PNWU) School of Dental Medicine to train second, third, and fourth year dental students recruited from rural and underserved communities. 36 dentists will be added to the workforce each year starting in 2028, the majority of whom will practice in rural and underserved areas.
- WSDA supports the PNWU and YNHS request for funding to establish this new dental facility, where an estimated 18,210 dental visits will be provided annually to an estimated 6,000 patients by the students and faculty, increasing access to oral health care.

### Support Access to Water Fluoridation

- During the 2022 legislative session, the Operating Budget included funding for the Department of Health (DOH) to conduct an Oral Health Equity Assessment to identify unmet oral health needs and develop subsequent recommendations to improve oral health outcomes while also reducing health inequity through increased access to community water fluoridation.
- This session, WSDA is supportive of a budget proviso for funding to establish a workgroup to review the findings from the DOH Oral Health Equity Assessment, identify the communities in Washington experiencing the greatest oral health disparities, and develop recommendations for how to partner with communities to address oral health disparities and provide education about community water fluoridation and other oral health measures. This work group would include a member of WSDA.